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Chapter Seven

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S PLAY AND GAMES

CHILDHOOD is usually equated with play, and in Silwa it is the only period in which play and games are tolerated. Organized games form the major part of children's play life in Silwa. On very few occasions children engage in constructive or imaginative play by making animals, in the case of boys, or pots and jars in the case of girls, or by constructing a whirlwind toy out of paper and a palm-tree branch. Tin lids attached to a long palm-tree stick are sometimes used as wheeled instruments of play.

A child of about eight or nine years spends an average of an hour a day playing games, decreasing gradually as he grows older. Certain games are favourite in winter because of the physical exertion required helping to provide warmth, while others are more favoured in summer. In our following description of games, examples of the former are Nos. 2, 20, 21, 22, which are exclusively winter games, while Nos. 15, 16, 17 are preferred in summer, being sedentary, but could also be played in winter after playing a strenuous game. Some games by their nature are exclusively night games, such as Nos. 10, 11 and 12, especially on moonlit nights.

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There are no fixed times, however, for play, as children can engage in play whenever they gather in a sufficient number for a game. Sometimes one or two children are seen knocking at the doors of friends, calling upon them to join in a game. Here one sees the expression of reciprocity among children. On many occasions I heard a child blaming another for not coming to join him in play and saying, 'Don't you remember, I played with you the other time you asked me. If you don't come with me now, I won't play with you the next time.'

Immediately a group of children have gathered outside their houses they usually start playing a game. It was observed that most of the younger children or older children accompanying the toddlers would play outside their houses, while unaccompanied older children prefer to play in the recognized 'open spaces' at the edge of the village or where there is wide space between the houses.

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2. Another game for the same age group is called 'Shalal-balal'.[1] This is played with two equal teams of three to five members each, each team having a prefect, 'arif', who is usually the eldest boy. The prefects stand beside each other at what may be called a base, whilst the two teams stand intermingled at a distance from them. The prefects take turns in throwing up or away in any direction a small object, usually a bone. This 'bone of contention' must be retrieved by one of the players and returned to his team-prefect at the base. The game involves brute strength as well as cunning, for if any boy can obtain the bone surreptitiously amid the general scramble, he must cunningly shake off suspicion and rapidly reach his prefect. Otherwise the scramble continues, and the bone is fought out with struggle and chase. The winner's side calls out 'Fikum Humar', which scoffingly means 'That's a donkey for you'.

3. Another game of mixed ages is called 'The Buffalo's little horn' (Kurain al gamoosee). A younger boy is slung over the shoulders of an older boy so that his trunk hangs down freely behind the latter, while his knees flex over each shoulder and his legs are crossed over the chest of the older boy. The feet are held rigidly by the older boy to perform a butting and buffeting movement representing the little horns of the buffalo. Three or four couples are so made up. The struggle begins amidst challenging shouting of 'the buffalo's little horn' usually between two parties, the object being to dislodge the crossed legs and so cause 'the buffalo' to slip down. The 'horns' are thus destroyed and the two players so dealt with drop out of the game. The remaining couple resumes its attack on other survivors and so on until one couple is left as victor.

4. A similar game played by mixed ages is called 'Donkey's ride' (Rokoub Hamir). In this case a younger boy straddles the shoulders of an older boy, who holds the rider's dangling legs securely with his hands. The object of this game is to unseat the opponent by dragging or pulling him off his mount. This, however, rarely occurs, as the struggle between the riders usually takes the form of buffeting, pulling and pushing. Actual striking or slapping is not allowed. Although the younger boys seem to be the more active participants in the game yet the older boys can naturally assist in the struggle by manœuvring their positions to help their riders.

5. 'The water-carrier fight' (Harb al Sakka) is so called because the older boys carry the smaller boys slung across the small of their backs, grasping them firmly to themselves, similar to the way in which the water-skin is slung behind the water-vendor. The protruding legs are free to kick and to hit the opponents' free legs. The aim here, as before, is to dislodge 'the water-skin' from the back of 'the water-carrier'.

6. The combination of old and young boys also takes the form of a race. The older boy stands putting his arms behind his back, clasping his hands together, while the smaller boy stands with his feet on the former's hands. A line of these couples race towards the goal shouting out: 'This is the tall

[1] The two words have no apparent meaning and they are put together just to rhyme.

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palm tree that extends from here to the island' (Al nakhla attawili, min hina lil jaziri).

7. One of their favourite games is for two boys to stand side by side linking the near hands, and for a third boy to crook a leg over the joined arms and place his hand on the near shoulder of each of the other two boys. As they advance at walking pace, he hops on his one leg, then sings 'The lame cock jumps over the hen' (Arag arroug, nat al faroug), as they quicken their pace. Races can be run in this way, having teams of three.

From the age of nine and ten till thirteen and fourteen years boys play more complicated games which are, on the whole, tougher and require more muscular skill, lasting longer.

8. For instance, a boy stands facing a wall, leaning forward with his palms flat to support him, his legs apart. Another stands behind him grasping him round the waist, another stands behind this latter grasping him similarly, and so forth for as many as are playing. The last one, however, is the active player in the game. His task is to detach each member, one by one, from the chain. This he must do by grasping the last member by both legs and pulling him how he will until he has detached the person in question, dragging him away to a base. Then he returns to tackle the next victim and so on. When he has finished this, another member is dragged till the chain, thus disconnected, is reformed to start again.

9. The game of 'Drag him, bring him along' is an interesting game for this age group. The boys are divided into two teams of equal numbers, and face each other on either side of a line drawn on the ground. Each boy grasps his opposite number by the right hand, across the line. The aim is to pull the opponent over the line of demarcation towards one's own side. Directly one member has done this, two boys, one from each side, are chosen to spit on the sand, and the loser, bending over with his hands on the ground, is slapped on the buttocks by all members of the other side. This continues until the two boys declare that the spit has gone dry. If, however, the victim wishes to curtail his punishment he must say 'I am a woman', whereupon the beating ceases, and the teams line up again and resume the struggle. A confession of 'womanhood' by a boy of one side is a point scored for the other.

10. There are also various versions of hide-and-seek. The well-known type is where one hides and the rest search him out while singing in chorus:

At-talab fat fat
The fox passed, passed
wif-dailo saba laffat
and in his tail there are seven knots.

A variation of this is called 'Policemen and thieves' with two teams, where each member of one team (the constables) must search out his opposite number in the other team (the thieves). Having found him, the searcher

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must bring him to the base, often a task which entails struggle and strategy. After all the thieves have been rounded up, the teams change places, and the game goes on.

11. On moonlit nights the following game called 'Who jumped over thee, O little pot?' (Meennattak y kwaidees) is played with great zest. Two boys are chosen by turns, one to bend over on to all fours placing his head between the knees of the other facing him. The former's eyes are covered by the latter's hands, so that he cannot see. The other boys jump in turn over the crouching boy, who at each jump is asked by his partner by saying 'Who jumped over thee, O little pot?' If he guesses correctly, he can immediately change places with the jumper. If, however, he does not guess any of the names, the boys disperse after secretly informing the partner where they will hide, and the crouching boy must then guess where each one has hidden. A correct guess will merely bring back the boy whose place was correctly guessed from his hiding place, but inability to guess will mean that the hiding boy must be carried back to base.

12. 'The hidden heaps' (Kwaimat ad-das) is also a game played preferably on a moonlit night, with as many boys as possible joining in, as it is, *par excellence*, a game of the crowd. Two senior boys are chosen as leaders and the other boys pair up. The pairs decide on names beyond the leaders' hearing; one is wheat, the other barley, one is horse, the other donkey, and so on. They return to the leaders who alternately are given two such agreed names to choose from, and thus the two teams are formed. The leaders and their teams then set off in opposite directions, each team agreeing on the limits of an area to be covered. The aim is to make little heaps of sand or earth in out-of-the-way places, so unobtrusive that some effort must be made to discover them. The first team to return begins to make a noise, shouting, howling or calling, so that the other team shall return. Then both teams set off into the other's territory, to destroy as many of the heaps as they can find. On their way they sing:

Sharrag, gharrab, ya liamoon,
In the east, in the west, there are lemons,
Bahhar, ghabbal, ya liamoon.
In the north, in the south, there are lemons.

Then at last both teams meet again, and there is a check by each leader of the other team's work. This necessitates visits afterwards to both areas by both teams, and the heaps still left undestroyed on both sides are totalled up, the winning team having a balance of undestroyed heaps in their favour.

13. 'The little rope' (Hibail) is played with two boys seated on the ground facing each other, holding a rope tautly between them. One is called the 'Bridegroom', the other the 'Bride'. The other boys take turns to approach the 'bridegroom' and strike him with a small rope or a turban end. Then, and not before, the 'bridegroom' drops his rope and makes every

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attempt to catch the boy before the latter reaches a base. If he cannot catch the boy, but secures the striking rope, he returns and places this in front of the 'bride'. The striker cannot be 'home' without his rope and therefore must retrieve this. The 'bridegroom' may not attempt to catch the striker until the latter has touched his striking rope. It is a matter of quickness of eye, and running ability. If the 'bridegroom' catches the striker this time, the latter must take his place. If he does not and the striker reaches 'home' with his striking rope, the 'bridegroom' must reseat himself and the next boy then must advance to strike. 857* 526

14. Another game using a short-length rope is played by a group of boys. All of them stand some distance from a base, and one of their number throws the rope up into the air. Then all the boys scramble to catch hold of it as it falls and the lucky one then turns on the rest to strike whom he can while they are running back to base.

15. A game which involves no physical exertion is called 'Seega with Tab'. The tab is the instrument of scoring, and is made of a palm-tree branch (frond). It is cut a 'span' in length and a 'thumb' wide, one side being green, the other white. Four of these sticks are used in scoring. For playing, two of these sticks are held in each hand, the hands unite to shuffle them, and one hand strikes the sticks on to the other hand to fall on the ground. The scoring depends either on the number of the white sides turned up, one, two, three or four (called an egg), or on all the green sides up, which counts as six. A one must be thrown before scoring can begin, i.e. in the boys' phrase 'One must bring a boy' (a walad). On throwing an opening one the player usually shouts 'This is the boy that thrilled the village' (Walad kharab al balad). In subsequent throws a one allows an extra throw, as also does a four and a six. 857* 524

With the 'tab' a 'seega', a kind of Ludo, is played by making little holes in the ground in four rows of between usually six to ten holes in a row. These holes are called 'eyes' (Oyun). In each eye of the two outermost rows is placed a piece of stone (called dog), say sandstone for one row, and bits of pottery in the other, to distinguish the dogs of each player. One person or more can play on each side. The scoring is with the tab as already outlined. The main object is to 'eat' the opponent's dog according to the moves of the tab. The dogs can be moved only after scoring a one, they then become 'Moslems' after being 'Christians', and thereupon are called 'brothers' instead of dogs. They move along the inner row on the side nearest their home (dar) and then along the inner row on the opposite side, till it secures a place in the opponent's home. The whole crux of the game depends on a piece or pieces in a hole being moved along to a hole occupied by the opponent's piece or pieces; all these latter are thus 'eaten' and are removed from the game. Thus the one who manages to 'eat up' all his opponent's pieces first is the winner.

16. Another game scored by the 'tab' sticks is called 'The rule of the whip' (Hukm Kurbag). At least five boys are required to play this game

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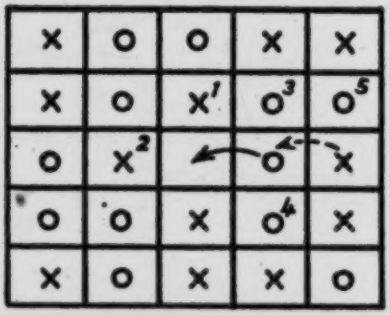
is accepted by the players as part of the enjoyment of the game, for it is held that the 'seega' is not chaste.



19. One rarely passes the village during the day without seeing boys playing the game of 'Awal-Hawal' ('Awal' means first, and 'hawal' means change, though here it is probably a rhyming addition). The game is also called 'First faeces'. There are teams playing with a ball, called 'Jal-loud', usually improvised with pieces of old cloth, though sometimes of rubber, and a striking post, which is a piece of stone set up on the ground. One team 'fields' whilst the other team have their 'innings', one at a time. The boy who is 'in' stands with his back to the fielders, and faces the striking post. He throws up the ball and on its descent hits it back behind him. This first hit is called 'Awal' (one). If any of the fielders catch it, the player is out. Otherwise, whoever retrieves it is allowed to aim at the striking post, from where he found the ball. If he strikes the post, the player is out, and another member of his team takes over. If the fielder fails to hit the post, then the player strikes the ball again, saying 'Tani' (second), and so on, if he can, to the third striking called 'Abu' (father). If he succeeds in not being caught out, or the retriever has not hit the post, then he turns his face to the fielders and strikes the ball towards them with his hand. If he succeeds three times in this way in remaining 'in', he kicks the ball towards the fielders—he is allowed three kicks in all, provided he remains 'in'. There are nine possible strikings of the ball by the players who are 'in' to score 'a donkey', or another three added if they want to have 'a donkey ride' on their opponents. In the case of the latter, the two captains do not take part in 'the donkey riding' and play by themselves. The 'ride' of the winning team lasts for as long as their captain is not 'out'. Directly the captain is 'out' the two teams change places. One of the most important rules in this game is the strict observance of the order of striking the ball, and to make a mistake in calling out the sequence is to be declared 'out' by the other team saying 'You are jumped over' (Hub alaik).

20. 'Shattat Battat' is a very similar game to 'Awal-Hawal'. It is played

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with two sticks, one a yard, the other six inches, in length. The teams pair up, one having innings, the other fielding. A hole is dug in the ground and the smaller stick is laid across the hole. The first player strikes this smaller stick into the air by lifting it smartly with the longer stick. If the stick is not caught, whereupon the player is out, the fielder aims it at the hole where it must either hit the stick or fall into the hole, and the player is then out. Assuming that there is no catch or successful aim, the player then proceeds to build a small heap of earth on which he places the little stick sloping with the upper end free. He then strikes this upper end down, the stick flies up and he strikes it again as hard as possible. It is now a question of catching, otherwise wherever the stick falls, another heap is made and the little stick is struck again for as many as twelve times in all. If no catch has been made, the losing team must carry the winners, with the exception of the leaders who walk back to the base.

21. 'Shad' is also another absorbing game for the boys, especially the adolescents.[1] It requires a large open space, and consists of two teams made up by pairing with the usual procedure. The boys usually strip to the waist, keeping only their pants with turban strips tied round the waist. The two teams face each other in a row, each boy holding his right foot up behind him with his left hand. In their initial struggle the team that is 'in', 'hides' a member, who plays the 'bride', and he does not begin to play until later. The teams advance on each other, hopping along, the aim being to jostle, push, shove, pull, using only the flexed knee and the free hand, although charging is included. In this free fight the object is to knock over the opponent, who is 'out' if he lets his foot slip from his hand or falls on the ground. If the 'bride's' team is left with one or more against an empty field, then the 'bride is safe', and the game is won. If a few of the opposing team, or even one, survive, having vanquished all the 'bride's' team, the 'bride' then has to face those opponents, her job being to hop off to a goal without actually being engaged in any fight with the opposing hoppers. As dodging, speed, and nimbleness are required from the 'bride', it is usually the fastest player who is selected as 'bride'. If the 'bride' reaches 'home' safely—that side has won; if she is unsuccessful, the other side changes place, and chooses its own 'bride' to resume the game.

22. Another hopping game, this time without teams, is played by three boys at least. Two boys sit facing each other, their legs extended so that their feet touch each other, their legs forming a diamond shape. The third boy holds his right leg behind with his hand as in the 'Shad' game. Then follows a series of hopping feats of ever-increasing difficulty, where the two boys make him hop over them higher and wider at every turn. In hopping he must not touch any part of them with his foot or leg. The penalty is that he lies prone between their legs and is squeezed. From this the game has derived its name 'To be squeezed' (Kammatat). To release himself the victim must confess 'he is a woman' or say that 'he is in God's

[1] 'Shad' means 'Tighten yourself'.

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shelter' (a woman's phrase). Otherwise he has to push up the legs of his 'squeezers' and thus by loosening them he can escape.

23. A form of wrestling is indulged in by boys to test each others' strength, or settle an argument. The boys embrace each other, one arm passing round the shoulder; thus, both have an equal hold. The aim is to throw the opponent on his back. Arms in the holding position are only to be used to exert pressure, and legs can be used to trip the opponent to fall on his back. The winner declares his victory by announcing that 'he has brought so-and-so's back to the ground'. This struggle is sometimes the result of a climax in argument and threats, when one challenges the other to 'come outside' for a 'Sirai', so that they can struggle without interference from others.

These are practically all the games played by the boys, and now the girls' games will be described. A typical game for girls is called 'Tugul' (weights), which is similar to 'fivestones' played in Europe, except that in this case 'marbles' are used instead of cubes. The preparation of these little balls entails a good deal of work in shaping and smoothing pieces of sandstone, and sometimes pottery, to about half an inch in diameter. The game is usually an individual game played normally by two girls. The first play is to grasp the five 'marbles' (ten in the case of older girls) in the hand and throw them up in such a way as to intercept their fall on the ground with the back of the hand—the purpose being to scatter the marbles haphazardly. The second play is to throw up one marble, and grasp a second, catching the first as it falls. The caught 'marble' is then put aside and the remaining marbles are to be grasped in the same way during the throwing up of the first marble. The third stage is exactly the same except that two marbles must be picked up at each throw; the fourth stage entails grasping three and then one, at each throw. The final stage is to place the marbles on the back of the hand, to throw them up and grasp them all, while they fall. If at any stage the marble is not grasped, or the thrown one is not caught, or, if in the final stage all the marbles are not caught, the girl loses her turn to the other. When picking a marble, no other marble must be touched.

The game therefore requires a degree of skill and co-ordination, e.g. in the choice of marble to pick up, and in the arrangement of marbles on the back of the hand. It is a game at which girls of ten spend hours, and is enjoyed by both young and older girls. After the game is finished the girls usually dig a hole in the ground to keep their marbles for further play.

The second game is a girls' version of the 'Seega' played by boys, of four rows of four holes, and is played by four girls, two on each side. The two rows nearest each team are their 'home' rows. Two girls sit opposite the other two and one side starts. The girl on the left places her left hand behind her back and grasps the left hand of her partner, who is seated on her right. Thus both girls have their right hands free. The first girl sings a ditty, punctuating the words by putting her index finger in each hole.

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*857 524 The ditty goes on like this: 'Boos, Boos, daughter of Hussain the afflicted, has filled my thoughts at midday (when the sun is hottest). May God fill her thoughts.' The idea is to squeeze a finger of the hand held behind her back while pointing to a particular hole. Thus the two playing girls choose a hole without the other side knowing which one it is. Then the girl whose finger was squeezed hides herself behind the back of her partner, merely by leaning over sideways. The opposite team has three guesses as to the hole chosen. If they guess correctly the turn passes to them. If they do not guess correctly the girl who was hiding reappears to confirm that by showing them the correct hole. The idea of her being separated from her partner is to prevent collusion. In this case, one girl from the successful side spits into one of the 'home' rows of her opponents. The hole is then closed by throwing in some earth. The aim of the game is to close all the holes of the opponents' rows. The first side to do this has won.

*857 A very popular play situation with girls is the representation of some of the adult female occupations and ceremonies. This would involve making straw figures, bedecked in bits of cloth as men or women and children, and with the help of stones, building a house.[1] All the details of an event or ritual are played out in a make-believe way. Thus marriage, circumcision, cooking, and social meetings are all imitated.

524 The adult world is almost entirely deprived of organized games. Men play the 'Seega' (No. 19 only, and on ceremonial occasions 'Hatab', ● 526 which is a form of fencing played by two persons, each holding a thick stave (nabbout) of about six or seven feet long, each player trying to strike the other on his body. Women have no organized games of any sort, not even those played by the girls.

*857 519 In a sociological analysis of play situations and games it is appropriate to refer to the attitude of adults towards play. The notion of a 'dignified man' as a social ideal, contrasts with that of a man who plays. This reflects the marked dichotomy between the adult world which is considered to be serious, busy and involved in social happenings, and the children's world which, being considered transitory, uneconomic, and even frivolous, is in most cases despised by the sober adults. To describe a grown-up's action as 'childish play' is to condemn it, and such a phrase is highly offensive and might lead to bitter altercation, even blows.

Thus one can hardly find any adult who shows any interest, much less enthusiasm, in children's play and games. Indeed, it would be unbecoming in an adult. If a group of men happens to gather near some children playing, the children immediately realize the situation and have to withdraw somewhere else; otherwise they will expose themselves to a scolding or a missile directed at them. Whatever adults do, is work, for it is only 519 children who play. Yet this does not mean that they have no leisure; they spend it in exchanging news, gossip, tea and coffee drinking and visiting

[1] By the time they reach adolescence girls are expected to have made a sufficient number of dolls to be used as a decoration for their marital homes.

* [The author apparently means No. 18, see category 116, pp. 150-151--analyst]

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each other. But they think it below their dignity to play games or 'bounce about'. When the writer told a gathering of villagers about some of the games played by adults in the cities they denounced it as childish and undignified. One of them added in excuse, 'By the end of a day's work we are worn out; we just want to relax and not play'.

Looking at this question from the adult viewpoint, it is not incorrect to state that growing up in the village is a continuous process of weaning the child from play to the serious activities of 'a dignified man'. In infancy a child might respond truthfully to the father's question as to whether it had been playing, but as the child grows older, the fear of giving a direct answer increases, and an evasive reply replaces the earlier readiness to tell the truth. An adolescent would definitely deny playing, for fear of reproval or even punishment. Thus an adolescent who has imbibed 'adab' is one who has outgrown all play in 'open spaces', and has thus severed all links with the most characteristic feature of child-life. On the whole, by the age of sixteen for boys and thirteen for girls, they normally terminate their play life as one of the signs of their maturity.

There is also the religious factor that contributes to the regarding of play as an undesirable activity. This religious motive is mainly due to the effect of the mystic tradition abominating play as an indulgence in pleasure which should be avoided. According to the mystic views, 'a pious man' should devote himself to worship and work; but play is 'lahw'—licentiousness. In the minds of the people the underlying concept of 'lahw' extends itself to other types of entertainment, e.g. the cinema, the theatre, playing or listening to music.[1] While it is true that the younger generation, in some part, go to the cinema whilst visiting the towns, the majority of the older generation regard cinema and theatre-going as 'haram'—something sinful. This 'Puritan' attitude towards play and entertainments, however, has no Koranic support; it is only based on the example of the rugged and restrained life of the 'pious ancestors'.

Looking at the organization of games, the second striking feature, after the marked dichotomy between the adult's and the child's world, is the almost complete segregation of both sexes, in games, after the age of six or seven at the latest. The sex distinction is so binding that it is unbecoming of a member of one sex to play the games of the other sex. Nevertheless, the writer has seen a group of girls in one of the back streets play the ball-game 'Awal-hawal'. Yet immediately they noticed a man approaching (not the writer), they all dispersed, only to resume play later. In contrast with the boys, ball-games with the girls are usually restricted to wall bouncing or catching games. There is no single game which is played by both sexes.

[1] This tradition is very similar to that of the Puritans in England as shown in the following quotation from the early eighteenth century: 'Play must be forbidden in all its forms. The children shall be instructed in this matter in such a way as to show them, through the presentation of religious principles, the wastefulness and folly of all play. They shall be led to see that play will distract their hearts and minds from God . . . and work nothing but harm to their spiritual lives.'

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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cliff on which the monastery is built towers up above the canal, while behind the building, and outside its surrounding walls, lie two fairly large cemeteries, one Christian and the other Muslim. The present building stands on an ancient site, and many of the old walls of the church and religious houses around it are of great thickness. A considerable portion of the old walls which surround the whole settlement still remain intact, and stories are told of the miraculous powers attributed to them. This monastery, as the massive character of the ancient walls indicates, must have served

FIG. 146. A MONASTERY DEDICATED TO ST GEORGE

as a stronghold for the Christians, who built it when religious wars raged between them and the Muslims. One or two pillars preserved in the more modern church are, so I was told, relics from an ancient building which has perished.

The annual festival held here in honour of St George attracts a great number of people, who flock to the monastery from considerable distances. It is interesting to observe that the crowds which congregate within the monastery precincts are composed of quite as many Muslims as Christians. Except for the fact that there was no *zikr*, the proceedings were much the same as those of the Muslim festivals described above. The same trading went on, and similar musical and other entertainments were provided. This *mūlid* continues for a week, and during the last few days horse-racing and displays of fancy riding take place. Many of the visitors

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39. *T*.—This is not quite true. Fellaheen are frequently to be seen in the Nile and in the canals, swimming and splashing about for pleasure after a hot day's work. [515 524]

40. *T*.—In 1943 the cheaper cotton stuffs were selling at a controlled price of P.T. 6 a metre, and a tailor would ask at least 15 piastres for the work. [463 435]

41. *T*.—At Akhmîm and Nagada in Upper Egypt a considerable weaving-industry still flourishes. The latter has a considerable trade with the Sudan. [288]

42. Dr. Theodore Bilharz (d. 1862) was a German lecturer at the Cairo School of Medicine. In 1858 he solved the mystery of this endemic disease by discovering the parasite that causes it, and thus made attack upon it possible. [744]

43. Department of Public Health : REPORTS AND NOTES ON ANKYLOSTOMIASIS AND BILHARZIASIS IN EGYPT: Government Press, Cairo, 1924,

This work contains a complete bibliography on the two diseases, with an account of their ravages in various villages of Egypt, and of the Government's attempts to fight them.

44. Ibnet ish-Shaty' : EL-RIF EL MASRI (THE EGYPTIAN COUNTRYSIDE), p. 125.

45. In 1935 Egypt imported 7,888 tons of coffee beans from Java, Santos and Yemen. [439]

46. See the ANNUAL REPORT for 1938 of the Central Bureau of Information on Narcotics. However, in a technical essay in the REVUE DES QUESTIONS SOCIALES (July 1940, pp. 94-106) entitled IS BLACK TEA HARMFUL TO THE HEALTH AND WORK OF THE PEASANTRY ? the author (who remains anonymous) feels justified in giving a negative answer. [272]

47. The famous Egyptian cigarettes are all made of imported tobacco. The intention was to avoid the danger of hasheesh as well as to gratify the Turkish Government. (The smoking of very cheap cigarettes has now become extremely common among the fellaheen. - *T*, 1945.) [276]

48. BAMIA and MOLOKHIA are two mucilaginous plants. The former, known in British colonies as OKRA, is 241 262

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or mausoleum of the sheikh, as the saint is called, booths and tents are erected, and the spot where he is buried is crowded with devout visitors. At night the halls of the mausoleum are lighted up, all the lamps above the tomb being lighted; the citizens crowd to the spot, listen to the reading of the Koran, and give themselves up to the intoxication of the *zikr*, a kind of religious dance which will be described afterwards. Coffee and sherbet are served out in the booths, and dancing-girls, singers, and instrumental performers attract the people, the stalls of the dealers in fruits and confectionery extend far into the city; all the shopkeepers have provided large supplies of goods; foreign traders expose their commodities; the festival assumes the appearance of a fair. The nearer the feast the greater the throng of people that assembles from far and near. Every hour brings more new-comers, many of whom advance in solemn procession, horsemen and flags in front, with drums, musical instruments, and women behind, who express in a melancholy chant their longing regards towards the sainted sheikh, or utter quavers of joy. The flags and the sheep that are dragged along in the procession are intended as offerings for the saint, in fulfilment of a vow made for a prayer granted in the course of the year. When the attendants of the sheikh, as sacrificial priests, have taken as much as they want, the remainder is divided among the struggling people.

At the place where the festival is held boys and youths amuse themselves on a large swing, the smaller and the girls enjoy a kind of see-saw; on the level unused area of the graveyard the equestrian performers go through their manœuvres. Clad in a wide flowing blouse, with the sleeves thrown far back, their feet planted on the broad flat stirrups, as they sit in their saddles that rise into a high pommel before and behind, holding upright in their hands a long pole, these performers ride at full speed, one after the other, from one row of people to the opposite. They display their dexterity by suddenly stopping their flying horses when close beside the frightened crowd, in accomplishing which their pole serves as a support, and by raising the dust in clouds causes their daring to be visible to a distance.

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special dainty on this day. Saturday is named "the Sabbath of the light," from the celebrated sacred fire, which on this day bursts forth in the Greek Church of the Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and on this account the Christian brethren there annually get up a spectacle, which often terminates in deadly blows and renders the intervention of the Turkish, and consequently Mohammedan soldiery necessary. On this day the Mohammedan faithful strengthen their eyes with eye-powders; everybody has a vein opened, or gets himself cupped, a custom which prevails in many places in the West also, and in Egypt, Mohammedan as it is, coloured Easter eggs are also eaten. People take *kishk*, that is, a decoction of wheat with sourmilk, boil it with eggs, and stick it with the coloured shells of the eggs above the doors to adorn the entrance for all time coming and ward off spirits. On Easter Sunday the "great feast of the Christians" (*id en-nusâra*) these hold a grand reception, with sherbet and holiday gifts, the Mohammedans in a friendly and neighbourly way call upon the Christians as the latter did upon them during Bairam. The Easter Monday of the Copts, whose festivals are settled by the Greek calendar, is the universal spring festival for the adherents of both religions. The night before onions, beans, and a bouquet of roses are laid under the bed-cushions and slept upon. On Easter Monday the onions are crushed and stuck with some water on the door; the beans are stuck on the bar, and the roses are used as a nosegay. At the first streak of daylight everybody moves abroad, this being the day of *shimm en-nesîm*, that is, "air-smelling," or more poetically "sipping the zephyr." People go to the gardens or other attractive spots, and pass, if possible, the whole day there. At the most-frequented places sellers of coffee, sherbet, buza, and cooked meats establish themselves. A company of friends may take an Easter lamb with them, kill it at the rendezvous they have selected, and prepare *tanur*, that is, they cut up the meat in several pieces and bake it in an improvised earth-oven; or they make *shauirma*, that is, the whole lamb with the skin and hair on is placed on a spit and roasted at the fire. The day is spent

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796 [521] [526] in conversation, ball playing, and gymnastic exercises, and those whose conscience allows it smell the contents of their dram-bottle as well as the fresh air and roast meat. Health must be inhaled to-day since the five days' period of terror, the time of the *chamasin*, is now at hand. A serpent then wanders over the earth and infects the atmosphere with its poisonous breath, leaving behind small-pox, plague, cholera ("the yellow wind"), and all other varieties of disease. The curse is not removed till Whitsuntide dissolves it.

753 796 [796]

THE NIGHT OF THE DROP.

796 823 On the 17th of June a "drop" falls (according to the ancients a tear of Isis) into the decreasing waters of the Nile, and impregnates the wonderful stream. Its effect is soon after observed in the dirtier colour of the water, then in its more rapid flow, and lastly in its increase and overflow. On this day, or on the night, the "night of the drop," young and old flock to the banks of the blessed stream.

THE NERUS DAY.

541 On the 10th September, the first day of the Coptic solar year, the river has reached to about its highest point, and on this day—the *nerûs*, the people give themselves up to the pleasures of the carnival. For three days it is all up with the rule of the Turks; every little town chooses for itself in its own way, and from its own midst, a ruler (*abu nerus*), who has a towering fool's cap set upon his head, and a long spectral beard of flax fastened to his chin, and is clothed in a peculiar garment. With a long sceptre in his hand, and followed by a crowd of correspondingly-dressed bailiffs, hangmen, and scribes, he promenades the streets and turns his steps straight to the hall of the chief magistrate. Every one bends before him, the guards at the door make way, the governor of the province or of the town has the humour to let himself be ousted, while the new dignitary seats himself on his throne and holds a most rigorous criminal investiga-